

# **GRASSROOTS “NEIGHBORS UP IN ARMS”**

## **Televisió de Catalunya**

### **SYNOPSIS**

The neighborhood associations' struggle is probably one of the most generous and anonymous movements of its time. This program looks at the origins of one of the least known yet most important collective movements in Catalonia's recent history.

The first neighborhood associations sprang up in Catalonia over 40 years ago. Under the dictatorship of General Francisco Franco, they served as schools for democracy and citizen participation.

The neighbors who set up these associations had emigrated to Catalonia from Spain's poorest rural regions. One of the biggest exoduses from rural areas took place in Spain in the second half of the 20th century; in the 60s it was the biggest in Europe. Hordes of Spanish migrants made their way to industrial cities in Spain and abroad.

Catalonia was an economically prosperous region and a favorite destination for immigrants. Many newcomers settled on the outskirts of the big cities in flats that were thrown up by exploited workers and greedy urban speculators. In many cases, the workers built their own homes in neighborhoods lacking even the most basic amenities. Residents started forming associations to force local governments to give them basic services like traffic lights, health care centers, schools and public transportation. It often cost them months of demonstrations, fines and arrests. Under the dictatorship, the neighborhood association fight was illegal, underground and dangerous. Meetings and demonstrations were considered a crime and the Franco regime came down on them with brutal repression.

In this program, several of the main activists in the neighborhood movement are interviewed. In a screening studio, they watch a documentary in which they are the protagonists. Together with other friends, they give personal accounts of the fight they led for demands to improve their neighborhoods.

#### **A bus in Bonavista, Tarragona**

The residents of the Bonavista district, four kilometers from Tarragona, boycotted the public buses because of poor service and an increase in fares.

#### **A traffic light for Nou Barris, Barcelona**

The neighbors in Nou Barris decided to block traffic to pressure the City Council into putting a traffic light at a dangerous street crossing where there had been many accidents, some fatal.

#### **A health care center in Santa Coloma de Gramenet**

In this city bordering Barcelona, the neighbors demonstrated to demand a new health care center.

#### **A school in Can n'Anglada, Terrassa**

In this district of Terrassa, an industrial city about 30 kilometers from Barcelona, the neighbors demanded a public school for children who had no school to attend.

At the end of the screening of the documentary, the activists discuss how the neighborhood association movement has changed with the transition to democracy in the late 70s. They also talk about the challenges facing neighborhood associations today and future goals, such as adapting to society's new needs like those of young people and immigrants. This leads into the program's last story:

#### **Pardinyes, Lleida, A district for everyone**

The residents of Pardinyes agreed that their association would make welcoming immigrants to their district with dignity, mutual respect and cooperation a priority. They have developed a program to help integrate new immigrants.